

CHESAPEAKE BAY COVER CROP ENHANCEMENT CONFERENCE

Mission:

To increase and optimize the implementation of winter cover crops across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to enhance agricultural sustainability, improve nutrient and soil conservation, and protect water quality within the Bay and its tributaries.

Objectives:

- Promote the sharing of information on winter cover crops amongst agricultural conservation program staff, researchers, and policy stakeholders across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Champion the formation and/or continuance of state Cover Crop Enhancement Workgroups (CCEWG) to develop and implement state specific cover crop implementation action plans.
- Assist CCEWGs to develop state specific cover crop implementation action plans to identify and address critical information gaps, financial and technical needs, obstacles to implementation, and opportunities that would enhance cover crop adoption within the state.
- Provide continuing coordination, communication and support to the state CCEWGs and their respective cover crop implementation action plans through the Chesapeake Bay Program's Agricultural Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Workgroup (AgNSRWG).

Program:

Day 1 – Thursday Dec 18th 2008

8:30 am – WELCOME AND ORIENTATION

8:50 – 10:30 STATE REPORTS

State representatives will provide details on the cropping systems found their state, with an emphasis on opportunities for cover crop implementation (e.g., land base of row crops, acres in winter grains, predominant animal systems, niches for cover within typical crop rotations, current acreage of cover crop implementation, acreage of potential implementation).

10:30 – Break (coffee, tea, juice, fruit, danishes, bagels)

11:00 – 12:00 PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING COVER CROPS FOR PROTECTING WATER QUALITY IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

This presentation will explore the basic agronomic principles for managing cover crops for protecting water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Themes will include discussions of the water quality benefits of cover crops, principles for integrating cover crops into the nutrient cycles of cropping systems in the region, agronomic principles for establishing and managing cover crops, hydrologic drivers, and “points of importance” to consider when developing or deploying cover crop programs in the region.

12:00 – Discussion

12:30 - Lunch

1:15 – 2:15 COVER CROP IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: ECONOMICS AND PRACTICE

A panel of experts will discuss the practical economics of cover crop implementation, including variable costs and benefits experienced by the farmer; the roles of incentives, regulations, and voluntary adoption; links with farm planning programs; various state strategies; and opportunities for increasing and maintaining the use of cover crops on farms throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

2:15 - Discussion

2:30 –Break (coffee, tea, water, snacks)

2:50 – 5:30 COVER CROP LESSONS LEARNED: SUCCESSES, FAILURES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND EVALUATION STRATEGIES

This section will provide detailed information on the current status of cover crop implementation in each state. Speakers are asked to identify successful strategies, concepts and practices, as well as critical information gaps, needs, obstacles, and opportunities that would assist in increasing cover crop implementation in their state.

5:20 - 5:30 Discussion

5:30-5:40 OVERVIEW OF THE EVENING'S OBJECTIVES

5:40 - Break

6:00 – Dinner – CAUCUS BY STATE

7:00 – State leaders meet with steering committee

Day 2 – Friday Dec 19th 2008

8:30 am – WELCOME, OVERVIEW OF DAY'S OBJECTIVES

8:45 - SUSTAINABLE COVER CROPPING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY (round table discussion groups)

- Questions from audience, open discussion
- What do programs need to deliver to obtain water quality benefits?
- What is the future of funding for cover crop cost-share programs?
- New opportunities and future research needs (biomass, carbon, farm/nutrient economics)
- Prioritization of implementation areas
- Are there any low-hanging fruit that remain to be picked?
- Further discussion of incentives vs. regulations. How do we increase implementation?

9:30 – Break, pastries and fruit, bread, cheese, lunch meats, juice

10:00 - BREAK INTO STATE WORKING GROUPS

Identify priority action items for each state; develop cover crop action plan
Identify 2-year, 5-year, 20-year cover crop implementation objectives

Form strategy for future work as a state Cover Crop Enhancement Workgroup

11:45 - REPORT FINDINGS TO THE LARGER GROUP (~10 min per state)

12:30 - WRAP UP BY THE NEW COVER CROP ENHANCEMENT COORDINATOR

1:00 - Depart

Each state goes back with an activated Cover Crop Enhancement Workgroup. Follow-up oversight will be provided by the new Chesapeake Bay Cover Crop Enhancement Coordinator.